DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 592 FL 800 122

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TITLE Use of the Newspaper in ESOL.
PUB DATE Feb 90
NOTE 4p.; The Review is published by the Communications Division of El Paso Community College.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT The Review; v2 n4 p1-3 Feb 90

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Classroom Techniques; *English (Second Language); Instructional Materials; *Journal Writing; *Literacy Education; Media Selection; *Newspapers; Second Language Instruction; *Student Journals; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

This article encourages the use of newspapers in English-as-a-Second-Language literacy classes, and suggests individual and classroom activities that use newspapers in the instruction of students at all proficiency levels. The newspaper is seen as an instructional material that bridges the gap between the classroom and the real world, is easily accessible, contains something of interest for all students, and may be used throughout the students' lives. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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The Review
Communications Division
El Paso Community College

Speech **ESL** **Reading**

February 1990 **Volume II, No. 4**

Use of the Newspaper in ESOL

by Rogelio Chavira

The use of authentic and fresh materials in the ESL classroom is extremely valuable. The daily newspaper is an obvious source of practical and useful materials and articles. When creatively used, newspaper activities supplement the lesson objectives. In selecting appropriate articles and lessons to use, make sure you select activities that interest the students so that the experience will benefit both you and your students. Consider this sample activity to force students to think about punctuation:

"...the news-paper is cheap..."

* Take an article from the newspaper and use "Liquid Paper" to white out the commas and periods. Afterwards, have the students write in the missing punctuation. Other lessons using this same procedure may be to omit verbs, transitions, adjectives, pronouns, or prepositions. The presentation format of these lessons will depend on the instructor: one photocopy for each student, one photocopy between two students, one between a a small group of students, or presenting the material on a transparency on the overhead projector that the students copy.

My beginning ESL students have benefited from these activities.

* Cut out pictures from the ads and label then individually on index cards to make flash cards for vocabulary development.
* Cut out a picture of a well-known product, such as Glad (plastic bags), and have student rhyme words with the product such as: sad, mad, fad, and so on. This activity is an excellent homework assignment as well as good practice for using the dictionary.
* Have students go through the newspaper and cut out pictures of things they like or don't like. Use the pictures to write sentences. Extend the activity by using sentences with need or don't need.

"...it's the real and outside world..."

* Find pictures that show spatial relationships: in, over, under, at, over, etc. Have students write sentences about the pictures, such as: The car is under the

(cont...)

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bridge. The best pictures can be saved for future lessons. For a language experience lesson, write down the students' responses on the board.

* Have the students listen as you read a few scores from the sports page and have the students repeat them back to you or have them write down the scores.

* Find numbers in the newspaper ads that have to do with money and give the students practice by reading the prices.

* Cut out words from headlines and have the students put them in alphabetical order while they learn new words.

* Have the students make a collection of words that are identical in Spanish and in English, such as: hospital, doctor, and so on. Make a collection of words that are almost identical, such as: *education-educacion*, and *carro-car*. Continue this activity by making of list of words that look identical but are not, such as: *grocery-groceria* (a rude remark). Use the college newspaper, El Conquistador, if you run out of old newspapers to use.

* Cut out compound words from the headlines and have the students share their results. Do the same activities for opposites.

* Have the students collect pictures of people's emotions so that the students can practice the set of sentence patterns such as: He is nervous. He is not nervous.

Our middle-level ESL students benefit from these activities.

* Using short newspaper articles, the students circle the words that they do not understand and look up the definitions in their dictionaries. Save valuable class time by assigning as homework. This activity is excellent for learning and using new words.

* Cut out headlines from different articles and have the students match the headlines with the stories.

* Select an article and write out about twenty comprehension questions that the students answer about information in the article. Select an article of interest to the students to insure a lively discussion.

* Have the students write a paragraph about an interesting picture in the newspaper.

* Tell the students to listen as you read a short article to the class, then check for understanding by asking "who, what, when, where, and why" questions about the article.

"...use the college newspaper for your students to read, cut up, and do different activites..."

* Cut out comic strips and have the students put them back together in the correct order. As a self-check activity, write the correct order on the back of each frame.

* Read a comic strip to the class and then have the students finish the last frame.

* Have a discussion on the ways that prices vary from stores to stores. Have a group of students report their findings by writing a paragraph or giving an oral report to the class.

* Have students match captions with pictures. Again, let students practice their oral skills by allowing them to report to the class.

* Have the students find pictures to practice the concept: big, bigger, or small, smaller. Make copies of the best examples and have the students write paragraphs about them.

(cont...)

Our higher-level ESL students have enjoyed these activities.

* Have the students listen as you read a cartoon and see if the students can repeat the joke back to you using reported speech.

* Have students make a collection of different ways to vary the beginning of sentences. Have the students write ten examples of each sentence that they cut out. Give students the opportunity to use these sample sentences in their journals and give extra points or credit when they vary their sentences.

* Cut out several interesting photos of people. Assign several students to write descriptions of the people and then have other students match the photos with the descriptions.

* Give each student a copy of an article that describes some kind of problem. Have the students read the article and decide what is the cause and what is the effect.

* Have the students collect articles on future job possibilities.

* Follow a worthy news item throughout the semester, such as the homeless, health issues, or natural disasters.

* Distribute several ads to the class and allow time for the students to circle the facts in blue and the opinions in red.

* Have the students find cliches in newspaper articles, such as: Good as gold.

* Have the students cut out similes from the newspaper article, such as: She is as graceful as a swam.

* Assign the students to find recipes in the newspapers.

* Read the "Help Wanted" section of the classified ad. Compare the salary of different occupations and the education required to apply for that job.

* Collect the horoscopes for a previous day. Have the student tell the prediction and then compare with what really happened on that day. Try writing horoscopes to see which are better, the newspaper ones or the class-made ones.

* Write a letter to the editor. The students might want to write about way to improve the college. This activity is excellent for teaching paragraphs and using cause and effect. Several ESOL students' letters have been published by the local newspaper in the past.

* On a newspaper article, have the students underline the main idea in black and the details in red using markers.

"...the newspaper will always be available to all students..."

To sum up, remember that the newspaper is the only text that the majority of students can continue to read throughout their lives. In your class, the newspaper can bridge that gap between the classroom and the real world outside. The newspaper embodies practical vocabulary that the students will need to use over and over again throughout their lives and the newspaper deals with reality. The motivation for reading and for discussions are built in every article. Finally, the daily newspaper provides something for all the readers.

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